

Merritt Community Inclusion Impact Statement 2025

Program Overview

The Community Inclusion Program in Merritt continued to support adults with diverse abilities to build meaningful connections, develop life skills, and participate fully in their community. Grounded in person-centred planning, the program prioritizes individual needs, preferences, and goals while promoting independence, confidence, and overall well-being. Through a balance of regular programming, community engagement, volunteering, and individualized supports, participants were empowered to strengthen their social networks and enhance their quality of life.

Overview of Regular Activities and Community Engagement

Throughout 2025, participants engaged in a wide range of inclusive and meaningful activities that supported physical health, social connection, and personal growth. Regular programming included:

- Food Fridays, where participants selected themes and actively participated in meal planning, preparation, and serving, fostering teamwork, independence, and a sense of accomplishment.
- Weekly Special Olympics Bowling in Merritt, with occasional trips to Kamloops, supporting physical activity and social inclusion.
- Weekly Swimming, promoting physical health and confidence, with both local and out of town pool visits.
- Seasonal and Annual Outings, including the Desert Hills Pumpkin Patch, Kamloops Wildlife Park, and the second annual trip to Bridal Falls Waterslides, offering opportunities for recreation, bonding, and new experiences.
- Community Social Events, including parties in Kamloops, supporting broader social engagement and community connection.
- Chili and Coats, a community-driven initiative planned and facilitated by participants and staff, providing food and warm clothing to community members in need.

Participant Voice

Participants shared positive feedback about their experiences in the program, highlighting increased confidence, belonging, and personal growth:

“I’ve learned new stuff, like how to talk to others better and how to do things by myself. It’s good to feel like I’m getting better.”

“I feel important here. People listen to me, and I can say what I think. I like being part of the group.”

“The staff are nice to me. They help me when I need it, and they make me feel good about myself.”

Key Impact Areas

Engagement in individual goal planning increased significantly compared to last year. In 2025, approximately 90% of participants and caregivers attended planning meetings, exceeding the 70% target and improving on 2024 participation. Information gathered was consistently used to guide individualized supports and program activities throughout the year.